CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

Please enter the following amendments to the claims of the instant application:

1 - 25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said drug delivery unit has a volume of between 0.1 mm^3 and 250 mm^3.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material is capable of delivering the therapeutic agent to the inner ear in nanogram to microgram quantities.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said therapeutic agent is present in a quantity of between about 10 wt% and 40 wt% of the total weight of the drug delivery unit.

30 - 53. (Canceled)

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises a polyanhydride material.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises a polyorthoester material.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises hydroxyethyl cellulose.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises hydrophilic microspheres.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises a bioadhesive material.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said drug delivery unit is a multiphased composite drug delivery unit.

61 - 65. (Canceled)

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said release of said therapeutic agent is achieved by osmosis, diffusion, active/passive transport, or a combination thereof.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein the carrier material is biodegradable.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein the carrier material is synthetic.

69. (Canceled)

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein release of the therapeutic agent from the drug delivery unit is without inadvertent delivery to other tissue regions outside the round window niche.

71. (**Currently Amended**) A method for delivering a therapeutic agent into the inner ear of a living subject, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery unit comprising a carrier material and a therapeutic agent combined therewith, wherein said carrier material provides for controlled release of the therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time, and further wherein

said drug delivery unit is configured as a pellet, disk, tablet, plate, sphere, cube, cylindrical unit, **or** strand, ~~**or plug,**~~ and

said drug delivery unit is shaped and sized for partial or complete insertion into the round window niche of the subject; and

inserting said drug delivery unit directly into the round window niche of the subject such that said unit is positioned either partially or completely within the round window niche, wherein the therapeutic agent is released from the drug delivery unit, contacts the round window membrane and passes into the inner ear.

72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of 24 hours.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of hours.

74. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said therapeutic agent is released over a period of months.

75. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said carrier material comprises a polymer.

76. – 79. (Canceled)

80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said therapeutic agent is selected from the group consisting of urea, mannitol, sorbitol, glycerol, lidocaine, xylocaine, epinephrine,

immunoglobulins, sodium chloride, steroids, heparin, hyaluronidase, aminoglycoside antibiotics, antioxidants, neurotrophins, nerve growth factors, various therapeutic peptides, and polysaccharides.

81. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 80, wherein the therapeutic agent is an aminoglycoside antibiotic.

82. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 81, wherein the aminoglycoside antibiotic is gentamycin.

83. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said drug delivery unit is shaped and sized for complete insertion into the round window niche of the subject.

84. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 71, wherein said drug delivery unit is shaped and sized for partial or complete insertion as a detached unit into the round window niche of the subject.

85. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 84, wherein said drug delivery unit is shaped and sized for complete insertion as a detached unit into the round window niche of the subject.

86. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 84, wherein said drug delivery unit is positioned at a location which is spaced apart from the round window membrane.